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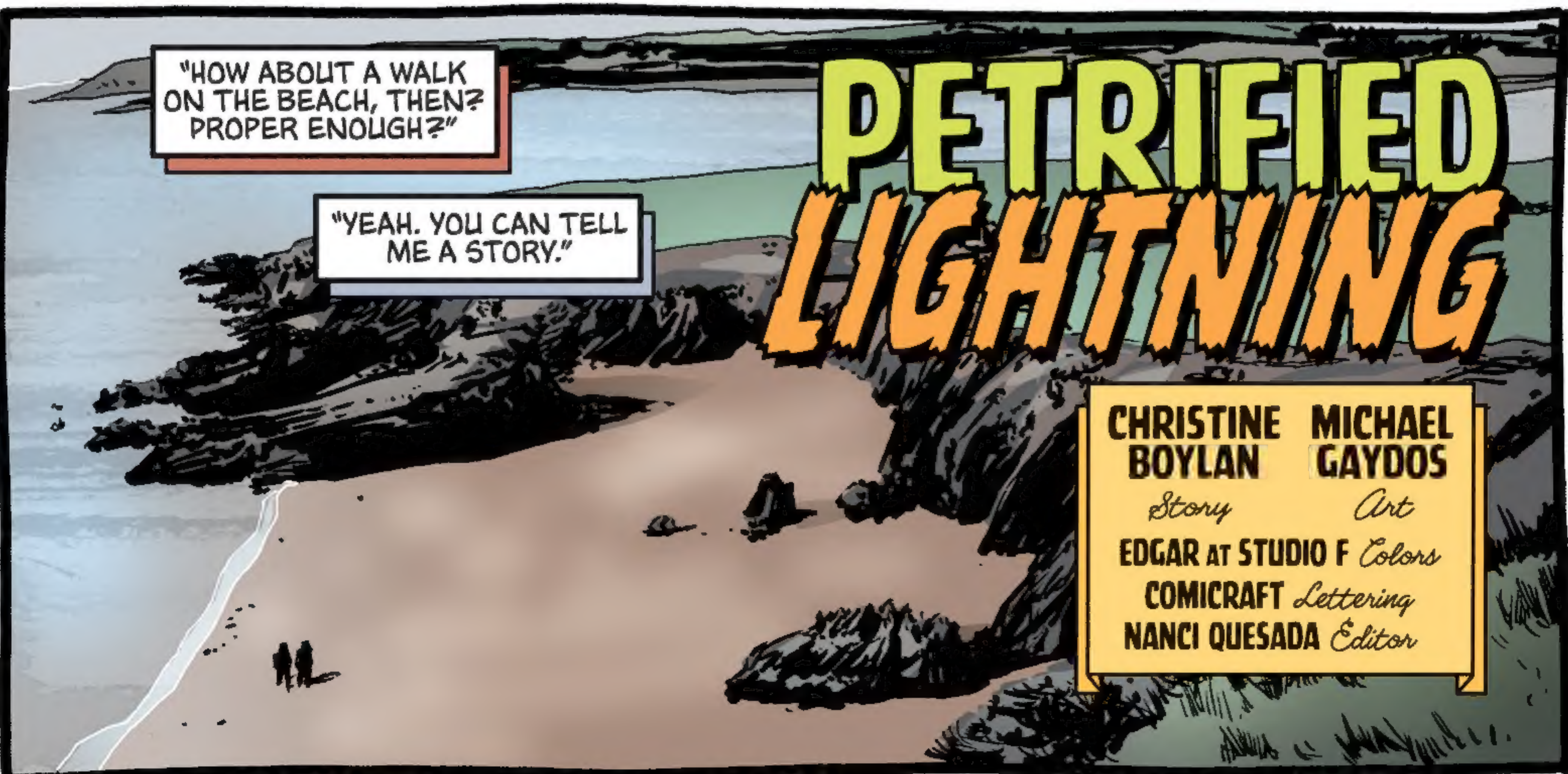
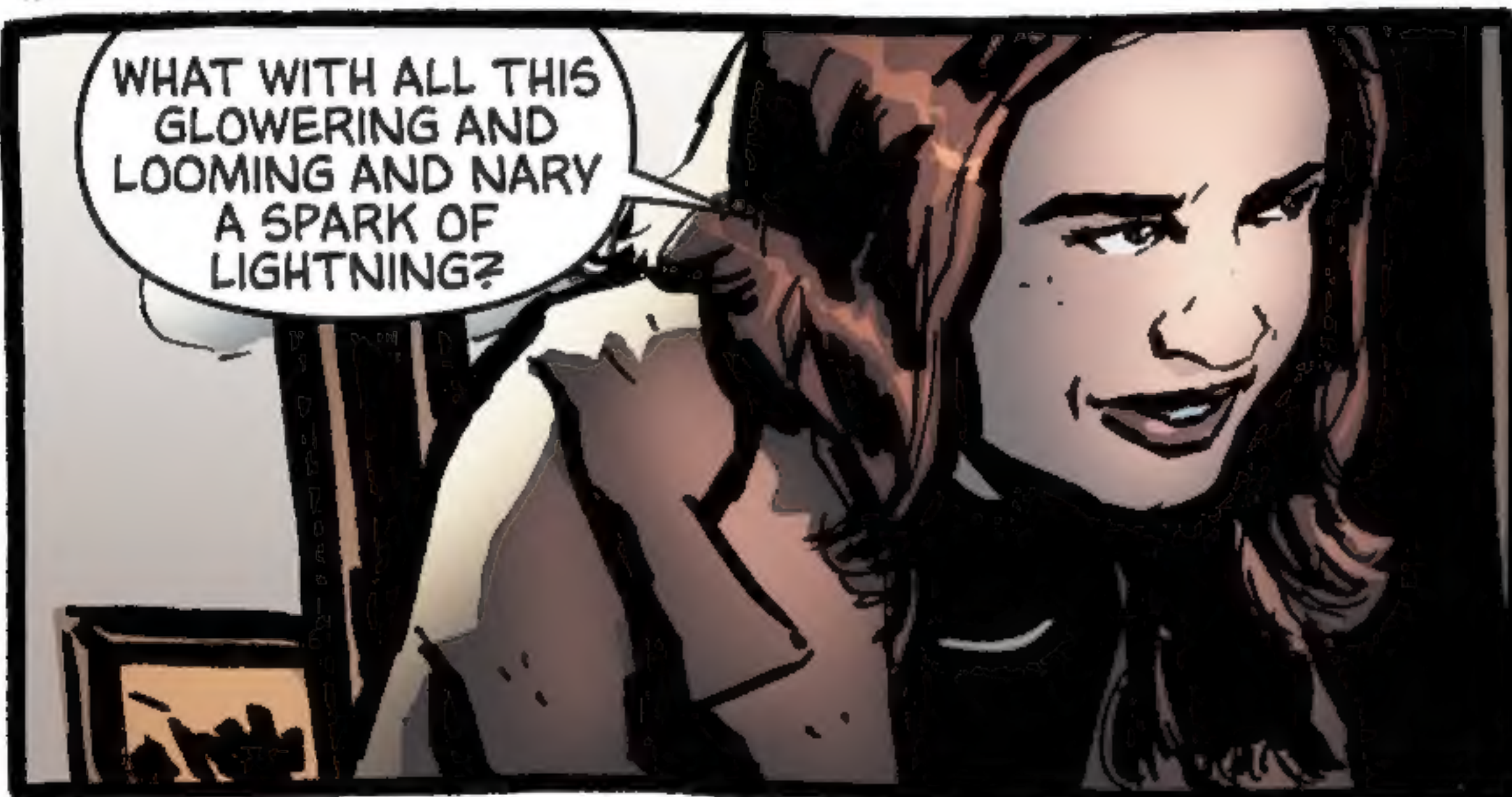


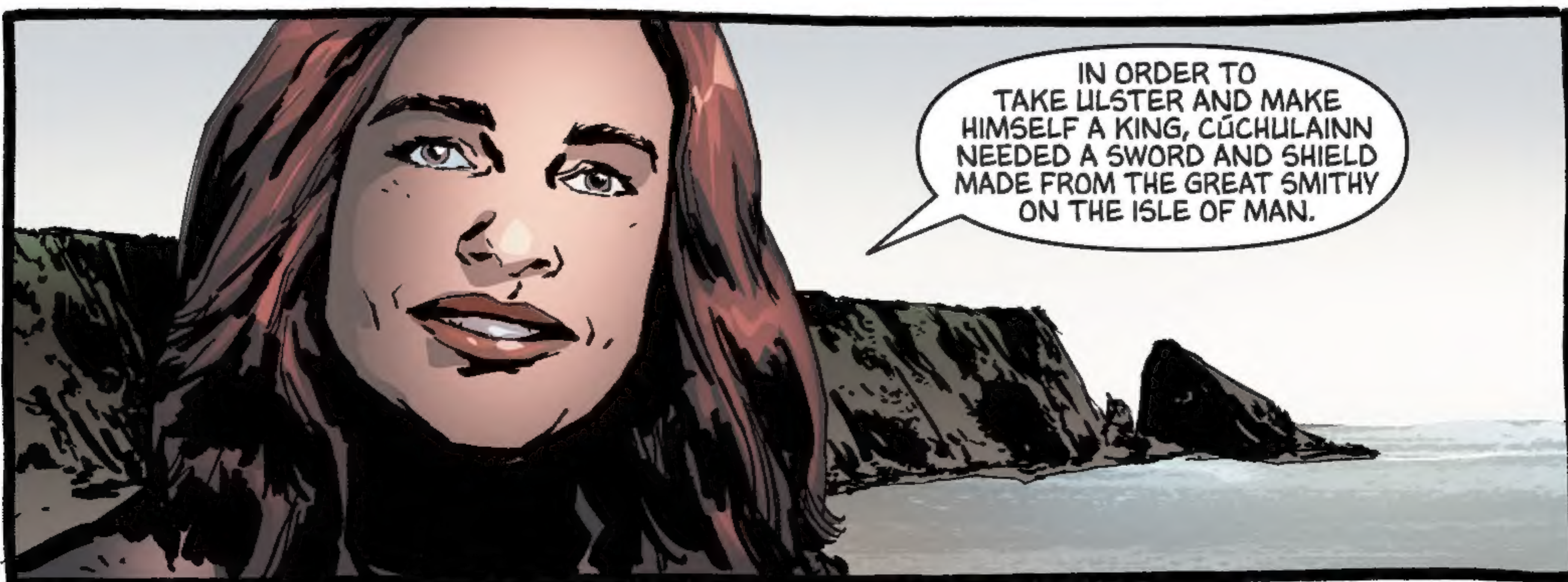
HEROES

CHAPTER 54

Petrified Lightning

Peter, suffering from amnesia, is discovered in Cork, Ireland by a gang of small time thieves. Peter is driven to find out who he is and where he came from. Ricky, the gang's leader, has presented him with a box that could lead him to his true past. But Peter has begun to question whether he should forget the box and simply start life over with his new love, Caitlin...





"WHILE HE WAITED FOR HIS WEAPONS TO BE MADE, HE WALKED ALONG THE STRAND NEAR THE SMITHY, IMPATIENT TO GET OUT AND GET CONQUERING.



"ONE DAY HE SAW SOMETHING GLISTEN IN THE SAND. SOMETHING THAT CAME FROM SO DEEP WITHIN NATURE THAT IT SEEMED... *UNNATURAL*.



"WHAT HE SAW WAS TEEVAL, YOUNG QUEEN OF THE SEVEN SEAS. A *MERMAID*."

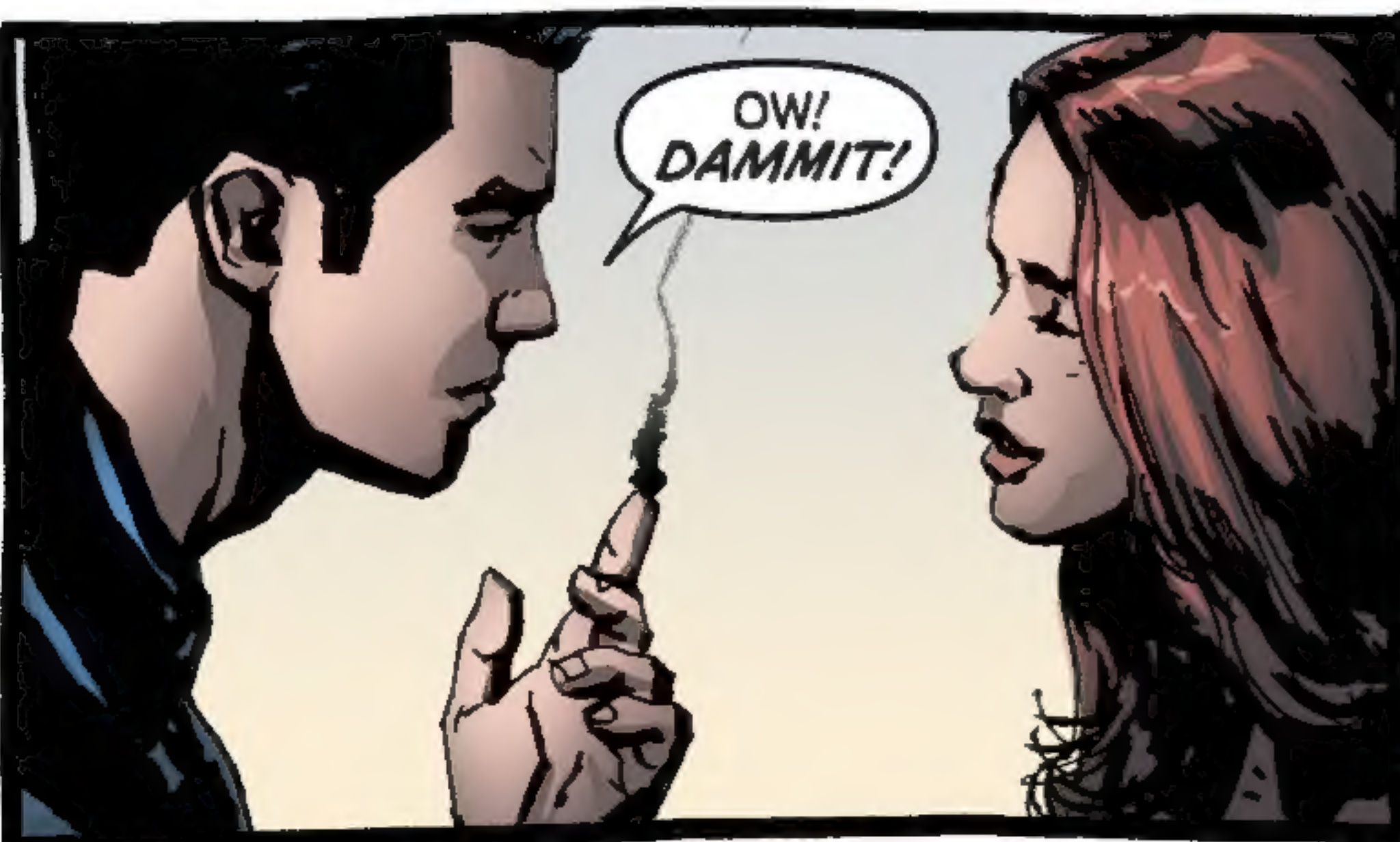


MERMAID?!



EXCUSE ME? YOU OF ALL PEOPLE OUGHT TO BELIEVE IN WILD CREATURES.

ARE YOU CALLING ME A WILD --



OW! DAMMIT!



STOP MESSING ABOUT AND PAY ATTENTION, OR NO MORE STORIES.

SORRY.



"SO CÚCHULAINN, THIS GOD, THIS BIG DUMB HERO, COMES LUMBERING PAST AND SEES THE SLEEPING QUEEN OF THE SEA."



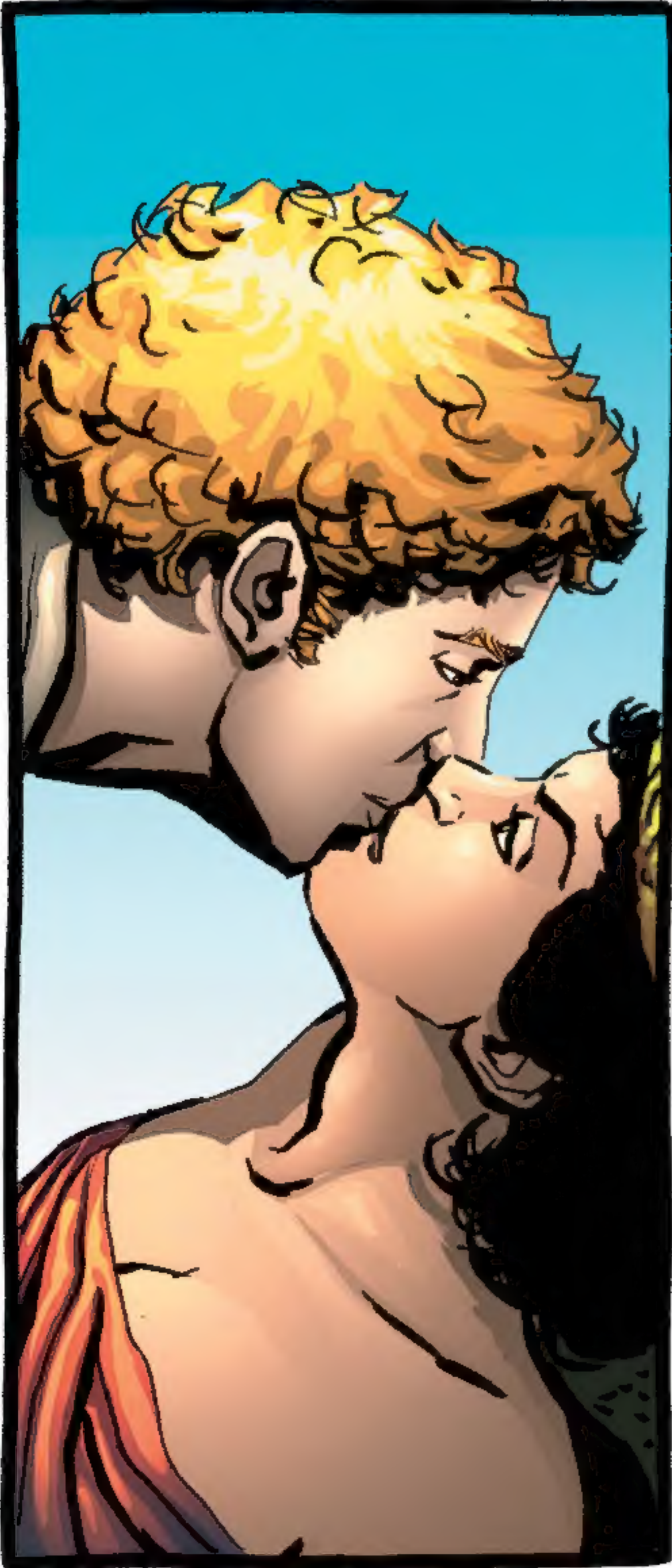
"AND THE SIMPLE BRUTE, IRELAND'S GREATEST MAN, TIES HER UP."

"WHAT KIND OF STORY IS THIS, CAITLIN?"

"SHHH."



"WELL, SHE WOKE UP IN A RIGHT RAGE AT FIRST -- FORGETTING HER OWN POWER AT THE SHOCK OF HER PREDICAMENT."



"BUT SHE SOON RECOVERED HERSELF."

"SHE LOOKED HIM DEAD IN THE EYE. SHE KNEW HIM. SHE NAMED HIM."



LET ME GO, MORTAL.

NO. I CAN'T. I'LL LOSE YOU.



"AND SHE MADE HIM AN OFFER."

UNBIND ME, AND I WILL GIVE YOU SOMETHING MORE USEFUL THAN MYSELF.



BUT I... I LOVE YOU.

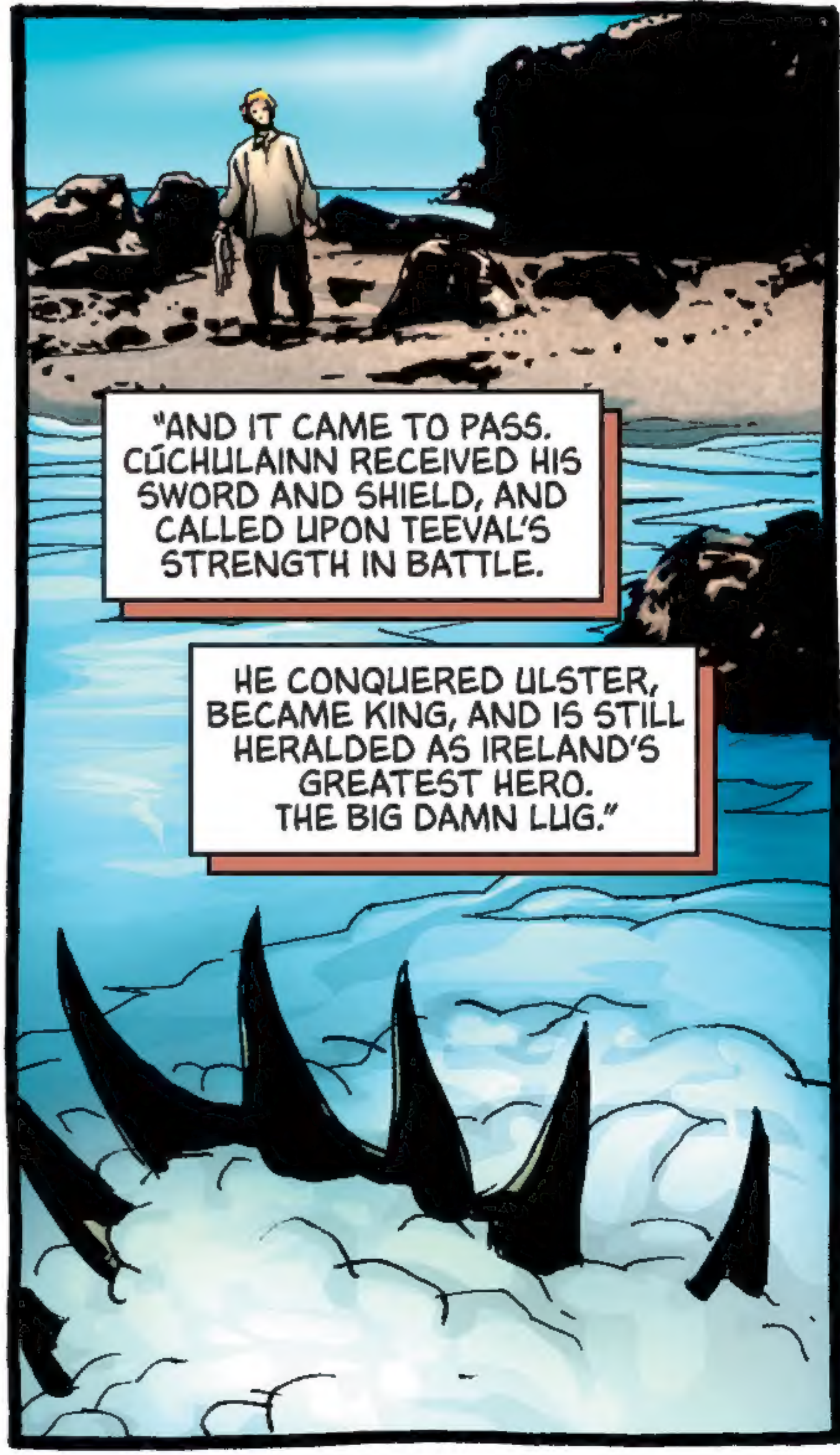
DON'T BE FOOLISH. DO YOU WANT TO CONQUER THE LAND OR DROWN WITH ME IN THE SEA?



GO TO THE SMITHY. TELL THE ARTISAN TO CARVE MY NAME AND IMAGE ON THE INSIDE OF YOUR SHIELD, JUST AS YOU SEE ME NOW.



IN BATTLE, LOOK YOU ON THE SHIELD AND CALL MY NAME, AND YOUR STRENGTH WILL BE MULTIPLIED EVEN AS YOUR ENEMIES WEAKEN AND FALL.



"AND IT CAME TO PASS. CÚCHULAINN RECEIVED HIS SWORD AND SHIELD, AND CALLED UPON TEEVAL'S STRENGTH IN BATTLE.

HE CONQUERED ULSTER, BECAME KING, AND IS STILL HERALDED AS IRELAND'S GREATEST HERO. THE BIG DAMN LUG."

